

## **Central District Health Position on HIPAA and Fire/EMS/Law Enforcement Notification of Positive COVID-19 Cases in Ada, Boise, Elmore, and Valley Counties**

### **Purpose**

Define Central District Health's (CDH) position on information requests related to the document, "COVID-19 and HIPAA: Disclosures to law enforcement, paramedics, other first responders and public health authorities," as issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights. Document found at <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/covid-19-hipaa-and-first-responders-508.pdf>

### **Position**

Central District Health will not share addresses of individuals with lab-confirmed COVID-19 to fire departments, EMS or law enforcement within its jurisdiction of Ada, Boise, Elmore, and Valley Counties. CDH will continue to notify these agencies in situations where a staff member of the respective agency has been exposed by an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19.

#### **Considerations for Central District Health's Position:**

- **The number of current positive test results does not indicate the full picture of COVID-19 presence or absence in our communities.** We recognize that current testing availability does not allow for all cases to be diagnosed, and many people are not able to be tested or do not opt to test until further into the course of their illness. According to CDC director, Dr. Robert Redfield, the number of asymptomatic individuals – those who will never have symptoms during the course of their illness – may be as many as 25%.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, we recognize that people may be infectious up to two days prior to showing symptoms.
- **Appropriate PPE should be used when working with all people having signs and symptoms consistent with COVID-19, regardless of test status.** Providing an address list of infected individuals does not provide awareness to fire departments, EMS or law enforcement should that person have a medical or law enforcement emergency outside of their home (i.e., en-route to a medical appointment).
- **Upkeep of list accuracy is unsustainable amidst pace of the COVID-19 response.** Given the pace and volume of incoming positive COVID-19 cases, particularly within Ada County, it is crucial that CDH's Communicable Disease Control emphasis be on proper illness investigation and follow up of cases. The capacity to provide regularly updated listings of case addresses and status updates of whether or not a person is still believed to be infectious, is not sustainable in this response.

### **Recommendation**

As an alternative to sharing lists, CDH recommends that cities and counties include appropriate respiratory illness screening questions as part of dispatch protocols. This approach will allow responders to don standard and transmission-based PPE appropriate to the situation.